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### Translator Recruitment - A Report on the 1963 annual Meeting of the American Translators Association

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du Nouveau-Monde, avec une pièce intitulée : *Le Marais*. En février 1958, elle a reçu le premier prix lors du premier concours de poésie de l'Université de Montréal et en mai de la même année, le premier prix de la Société des Poètes canadiens-français, dans la section des vers libres, et la médaille du Lieutenant-Gouverneur. En 1962, elle reçut le prix du Cercle d'Etude et de Conférences pour un roman qui n'est pas encore achevé... *la traduction*, son mariage à Me L. Cameron Des Bois, avocat, et la naissance d'une fille prénommée Valéry ayant lourdement hypothéqué le temps mis à sa disposition pour le terminer.

Berthe CHARETTE, SDIT



¶ **TRANSLATOR RECRUITMENT** — A Report on the 1963 Annual Meeting of the **American Translators Association**, Dale S. Cunningham, Rutgers-College of South Jersey, Camden, N.J., U.S.A.<sup>1</sup>

The tragic national events of the preceding afternoon lent a somber coloring to the Annual Meeting of the American Translators Association on November 23, and a moment of silence in memory of President Kennedy was observed before each session.

The morning session was devoted to contributed papers and was moderated by the New York translator and editor, Leonard E. Mins. The first paper, "The Trials and Sorrows of a Literary Translator," by Herma Briffault, was based on her experience as the translator of over thirty books. A literary translator must be an expert reader, a fluent writer, and the owner of an adequate reference library. He must also be or become a superficial master of varied fields ranging through law, medicine, trench-warfare, and horse-racing. Unable to afford a typist, the literary translator must pound out his long manuscripts accurately and quickly. The low pay deters the best from entering the profession : even ghostwriting or editing (which includes redoing bad translations!) is more adequately remunerated work. Other rewards are also slight, for the translator is usually neglected by reviewers and his creation is only rarely evaluated. Such dreary prospects are hardly calculated to attract young people to the profession.

Guy A. Gavrel, a translator with the National Research Council in Ottawa, spoke on "Translator Recruitment in Canada." It is difficult there to find and keep competent translators due to factors such as inadequate study of foreign languages in the secondary schools and the scarcity of translator training institutions. In addition, organizations which employ translators lack high linguistic standards, preferring speed to quality and even to accurate English. Lacking prestige in the public eye, the competent translator disappears under titles such as "Information Officer" or abandons

(1) Copies of the *Proceedings* will be available from the author of this report later in the year.

the field entirely for language teaching, journalism, or the like. Low salary rates and poorly defined professional standards are also to blame for this situation. The rapidly increasing need for translators makes the problem of recruitment in Canada an acute one, and discussion of the paper revealed similar problems in the United States.

"Learning to Translate from the Slavic Languages", was Dr. Henry F. Mins' subject, a paper with a practical orientation. He outlined ways of overcoming learning problems from the very start, pointed out the value of studying cognate languages, and pleaded for better, more natural English in translations by avoiding the pitfalls of *translatorese* caused by following the rhythms and speech habits (especially that of word order) of the source language. Dr. John Mish of the New York Public Library also dealt with specifics in his talk on "Oriental Snags in Translator Training." He contrasted the difficulties in translating from Chinese and Japanese and gave many practical suggestions for translators working from the latter. Despite the need for translators from the Japanese, he complained, there are few academic efforts to help fill the need or to correct the deficiencies of translators already in the field.

Nathan Arrow, a native New Yorker, spoke about "A Home-Grown Translator" — himself. While his overseas experience has been limited, Mr. Arrow had had extensive language instruction in school and college and he emphasized in particular the necessity of mastering English if one is to translate into that language. In addition to one's own study, and when such academic opportunities as the N.Y.U. translation seminars are lacking, working for industry or for a translation bureau where encouraging correction of the first efforts is available, is also a method of training (or self-training) translators. Haphazard and arduous as the method is, it can nevertheless lead to the development of competent, well-paid, and successful translators.

The need for such people was underlined in Boris Anzlowar's discussion of "Bio-Medical Translations in the Coming Decade." Mr. Anzlowar gave impressive statistics documenting the information explosion and increasing interdisciplinary interaction within the sciences which is expected to increase the demand for translation from foreign literature considerably. Although machine translation is expected to relieve some of the pressure by 1975, present translators and language specialists will be in even greater demand as editors of this material.

The luncheon was subdued and marked only by the reading of a telegram from STIC (ATA's sister organization in Canada) requesting that it be associated with ATA in a message of condolences to President Kennedy's family. The luncheon speaker was Dr. Daniel Van Acker, Chairman of the NYMCATA Committee for a Translator Center and Foundation Library in New York City. Dr. Van Acker outlined the progress of the committee in formulating the goals of this center, publicizing the idea, and bringing the project to the point of formal incorporation.

The afternoon session was divided between a panel discussion and a business meeting. At the business meeting charters were granted to ATA's California Chapter, the Eastern Language International Group, and the Spanish Language Division. Dr. Alexander Gode, now Executive Director of ATA, gave the Presidential Address reporting on ATA's progress during the first four years and urging for the future the establishment of both a division

devoted to literary translation and a fellowship or guild denoting quality within the ATA framework. Former Vice-President and President-Elect Dr. Kurt Gingold reported on the International Congress at Dubrovnik (see *Special Libraries*, December 1963, p. 648). Felix M. Oliva announced the other new officers for 1963-64 for the Tellers' Committee: Henry Fischbach, Vice-President; Dale S. Cunningham, Secretary; and Leonard E. Mins, Treasurer.

The panel discussion concerned the "Contribution of the Universities" to translator recruitment and was moderated by Mendor T. Brunetti of New York University. Also from N.Y.U. was Lewis Bertrand, who traced the history of translation courses in New York and of the development of the Saturday School of Languages under Professor Brunetti. Mr. Bertrand called for more support from industry to supplement the good work now being done by the Federal Government and made many concrete suggestions for future development of a full-fledged translator's school in New York. Dr. Jean-Paul Vinay from the University of Montreal described the extensive, if not yet entirely adequate work in training translators and interpreters in a country with two official languages. A fascinating part of his contribution was an outline of his institution's theoretical approach to the field of translation and a description of the books presently available. The Institute of Languages and Linguistics of Georgetown University was represented by Dr. Stefan F. Horn. Dr. Horn gave a history of the school and of its development of the present extensive programs in translator and interpreter training. He was also able to report on the research on machine translation being done at Georgetown, give samples of the output, and predict an increasing need for linguists to polish and correct what the machines produce.



# ¶ QUELQUES OBSERVATIONS CONCERNANT LE RÔLE QUE DEVRAIT JOUER LA COMMISSION DE DOCUMENTATION DE LA STIC <sup>(1)</sup>

I — Il est difficile d'essayer de déterminer quels services une commission de documentation devrait offrir aux traducteurs sans connaître d'abord ce que fait le traducteur pour se documenter. Cet effort personnel existe-t-il? Quelle forme prend-il?

Dans le passé, certains ont cru que la Commission de documentation devrait faire connaître aux traducteurs, par exemple au moyen d'un bulletin spécial, les nouveaux ouvrages, dictionnaires notamment, qui pourraient leur être utiles dans leur travail quotidien, élargissant ainsi presque sans limites le champ d'action des membres de la Commission.

Personne ne conteste la nécessité d'informer les traducteurs des nouveaux

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(1) Notes présentées au conseil de la STIC lors de la séance du 13 mars 1964.